



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Rep. Joel Kleefisch

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(888) 534-0038

Keeping Communities Safe from Heroin

We all grow up learning “Don’t Do Drugs.” However, as we become adults and even as many of us go on to have children, we realize how complex the issue of drug use really is. Some states have legalized marijuana in some form, some students take meth-related prescription drugs for very real learning disabilities, and many adults at some point in their lives will be on prescription painkillers, with numerous of these painkillers being opiates.

A common trend nowadays is for adolescents to go from the medicine cabinet to street heroin. That is, adolescents are starting off on prescription drugs, either due to their own injuries or surgeries, or due to pills that friends have given them, or from taking them from a family member’s medicine bottle. When those prescription drugs become either unavailable or too expensive, they either gradually or all at once make the switch to heroin.

The dangers of heroin are very real, and are unfortunately becoming a harrowing epidemic in our communities. Heroin is highly addictive, withdrawal symptoms are severe, and sadly, heroin overdose deaths are increasing at an alarming rate. In fact, Attorney General Schimel has stated that more people die in our state from drug overdoses than from car crashes.

This week, I had the honor of hosting a Coalition to Combat Heroin. The coalition is made up of members of both state and local government, police chiefs, the healthcare industry, and also members of organizations doing great things in the community. Our goal was to get a grassroots understanding of the transition from the medical cabinet to street heroin. As our Coalition to Combat Heroin continues to meet, it is our objective to come up with solutions and goals in addressing this disturbing pandemic.

We in the Legislature have made progress on this issue. For the past four years, we have worked to pass nearly twenty different bills related to this topic. One of those pieces of legislation is a bill, now law, that encourages communities to set up drug disposal programs so that unwanted prescription drugs can be disposed of safely, without falling into the wrong hands or risking misuse or abuse when they are no longer needed.

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We will not rest until we have turned the tide on this harrowing epidemic. For more information on this issue, feel free to visit the Wisconsin Department of Justice's website at: <http://doseofrealitywi.gov/get-support/>. For those looking for information on treatment and recovery, feel free to visit the Wisconsin Department of Health's website at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/treatment.htm>.

*Rep. Joel Kleefisch can be reached at P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53702-8952,
or by calling toll-free 1 (888) 534-0038, or by email at
Rep.Kleefisch@legis.wi.gov*